

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image processing apparatus comprising  
recording means for storing an image file including an  
image area for storing image data and also including an  
attribute area for storing attribute information;

description means for describing the attribute  
information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup  
language; and

writing means for writing the attribute information  
described by the description means into an arbitrary  
attribute area.

2. An image processing apparatus according to claim 1,  
further comprising

separation means for separating image data and  
attribute information stored in the image file; and

extraction means for extracting original attribute  
information by analyzing the attribute information described  
using the defined tag and separated by the separation means.

3. An image processing apparatus comprising  
recording means for storing an image file including an  
image area for storing image data and also including an  
attribute area for storing attribute information;

description means for describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

encryption means for encrypting part or all of the attribute information described by the description means; and

writing means for writing the attribute information encrypted by the encryption means into an arbitrary attribute area.

4. An image processing apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising

separation means for separating image data and attribute information included in the stored image file;

decryption means for decrypting the encrypted part of the attribute information separated by the separation means; and

extraction means for extracting original attribute information by analyzing the attribute information described using the defined tag and decrypted by the decryption means.

5. An image processing apparatus comprising

recording means for storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

description means for describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

compression means for compressing part or all of the attribute information described by the description means; and

writing means for writing the attribute information compressed by the compression means into an arbitrary attribute area.

6. An image processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising

separation means for separating image data and attribute information included in the stored image file;

decompression means for decompressing the compressed part of the attribute information separated by the separation means; and

extraction means for extracting original attribute information by analyzing the attribute information described using the defined tag and decompressed by the decompression means.

7. An image processing apparatus comprising

recording means for storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an

attribute area for storing attribute information;

description means for describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

encryption-and-compression means for encrypting and compressing part or all of the attribute information described by the description means; and

writing means for writing the attribute information encrypted and compressed by the encryption-and-compression means into an arbitrary attribute area.

8. An image processing apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising

separation means for separating image data and attribute information included in the stored image file;

decompression-and-decryption means for decompressing and decrypting the encrypted and compressed part of the attribute information separated by the separation means; and

extraction means for extracting original attribute information by analyzing the attribute information described using the defined tag and decompressed and decrypted by the decompression-and-decryption means.

9. An image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising

style sheet storage means for storing one or more style sheets for defining a display form in which the extracted attribute information and an image corresponding to the attribute information are displayed;

style sheet selection means for selecting an arbitrary style sheet from the style sheets stored in the style sheet storage means; and

output means for outputting an image and attribute information in accordance with a style sheet selected by the style sheet selection means.

10. An image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising display means for displaying the image and the attribute information output by the output means.

11. An image processing method comprising the steps of storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language; and

writing the attribute information described in the description step into an arbitrary attribute area.

12. An image processing method comprising the steps of

storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

encrypting part or all of the attribute information described in the description step; and

writing the attribute information encrypted in the encryption step into an arbitrary attribute area.

13. An image processing method comprising the steps of storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

compressing part or all of the attribute information described in the description step; and

writing the attribute information compressed in the compression step into an arbitrary attribute area.

14. An image processing method comprising the steps of storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

encrypting and compressing part or all of the attribute information described in the description step; and

writing the attribute information encrypted and compressed in the encryption-and-compression step into an arbitrary attribute area.

15. A program for causing a computer to execute a procedure comprising the steps of

storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language; and

writing the attribute information described in the description step into an arbitrary attribute area.

16. A program for causing a computer to execute a procedure comprising the steps of

storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

encrypting part or all of the attribute information described in the description step; and

writing the attribute information encrypted in the encryption step into an arbitrary attribute area.

17. A program for causing a computer to execute a procedure comprising the steps of

storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

compressing part or all of the attribute information described in the description step; and

writing the attribute information compressed in the compression step into an arbitrary attribute area.

18. A program for causing a computer to execute a procedure comprising the steps of

storing an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

describing the attribute information using a tag defined by a tag-definable markup language;

encrypting and compressing part or all of the attribute



information described in the description step; and

writing the attribute information encrypted and compressed in the encryption-and-compression step into an arbitrary attribute area.

19. An image processing apparatus comprising reading means for reading, from a storage medium, an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

separation means for separating image data and attribute information included in the stored image file; and

extraction means for extracting attribute information by analyzing the attribute information separated by the separation means in accordance a predetermined display style.

20. An image processing method comprising the steps of reading, from a storage medium, an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;

separating image data and attribute information included in the stored image file; and

extracting attribute information by analyzing the attribute information separated in the separation step in accordance a predetermined display style.

21. A program for causing a computer to execute a procedure comprising the steps of

- reading, from a storage medium, an image file including an image area for storing image data and also including an attribute area for storing attribute information;
- separating image data and attribute information included in the stored image file; and
- extracting attribute information by analyzing the attribute information separated in the separation step in accordance a predetermined display style.